

Key Ingredients: America by Food

INTRO KIOSK

title

Key Ingredients: America by Food

credits (copy 1 – Utah)

Organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in association with the Utah Humanities Council

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Curated by Charles Camp

Designed by SurroundArt

Edited and produced by the Office of Exhibits Central, Smithsonian Institution
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[State Council logo(s)]

credits (copy 2 – Illinois)

Organized by the Smithsonian Institution Traveling Exhibition Service in association with the Illinois Humanities Council

Curated by Charles Camp

Designed by SurroundArt

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[Smithsonian logo]
[State council logo(s)]

Intro text

Key Ingredients: America by Food

Are we what we eat?

The food on the American table may not define exactly *what* we are as a nation, but the traditions surrounding our foods speak volumes about *who* we are. Rooted in centuries of borrowing and sharing, food traditions are staggeringly diverse and constantly evolving.

Yet food customs resist rapid change. Helping to preserve our distinctive identities even as we share them, they embody an ideal central to the American experiment — that we are a nation sustained by exchanges between people across generations, across cultures, and across the land.

“American food” defies definition, except to say that it is what people in America harvest, prepare, and eat. There is no real recipe, just a few **key ingredients** constantly stirred by time.

SITES
Key Ingredients
Final 5-03

vitrine containing
misc. food objects
[no labels]

recipe box with recipes
Harlequin plate
knife, fork, spoon
Maryland crab mug
1940s Mason jar
can of black beans
can of condensed milk
can of wonton soup
box of beignet mix

(on panel A)
Florida postcard

(on panel B)
“Let’s Eat Out” book (McDonald’s)
Lexington Diner menu
Texas steakhouse postcard
Ted Drewes frozen custard postcard
chopsticks

(on panel C)
3 seed packets (onions, carrots, squash)
2 recipe booklets:
 New England Cookbook (Culinary Arts Inst.)
 Knox gelatine refrigerator recipes
potato masher
wooden spoon
egg whisk

KIOSK 1: A Land of Plenty

Section 1 banner

Land of Plenty

banner photo credit
(farming landscape)

Photograph by Scott Bauer,
USDA Agricultural Research Service

Section 1 intro label

Land of Plenty

Behind the beef in a winter's stew or the berries on a summer fruit tart is a centuries-old web of food traditions and migration patterns across a land of plenty.

Early European settlers on the Atlantic coast carried foodstuffs and traditions with them, but their ability to feed themselves in an unfamiliar land was enhanced by the shared knowledge of Native people.

The forced immigration of African slaves did not completely strip individuals of their cultures. African food traditions quickly began to enrich American recipes.

American Indian food traditions survived enslavement in the Southwest to blend with the cooking styles of Spanish colonists.

Asian immigrants supplied labor to California agriculture and to western railroad construction, while adding another set of tastes to American cuisine.

These are but a few elements in the mix that would become America's food.

PHOTO at top of panel

Top:
Salmon fishing off the coast of Oregon, about 1923
© Lake County Museum / CORBIS

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#20 - PHOTO

Combines at work in a Washington wheat field, about 1900
Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma

Amber waves of Old World grain swept over the genetic variety of native crops and changed the American landscape. Today, scientists and Native American groups are working to conserve, document, and restore native crops to prevent the total loss of agricultural diversity.

Subsection 1

Natural Bounty

So much of America teems with foodstuffs and potential for food production — from the fisheries off the coasts and in the Great Lakes to the rich farmlands of the Midwest and the grazing lands of the Plains. This variety supported many different Native cultures and inspired European immigrants to view America as a Promised Land.

#4 - PHOTO

Wheat field, about 1990
© Stuart Westmorland / CORBIS

#5 - PHOTO

Cattle roundup near Seligman, Arizona, 1963
Photograph by Joe Munroe, courtesy Ohio Historical Society

#7 - PHOTO

Pacific Northwest coastline, 1986
Photograph by Robert Glenn Ketchum
© www.robertglennketchum.com

“When the tide is out, our table is set.” — Tlingit saying

Subsection 2

Common Ground

There are three basic methods for getting food:

- * Hunting and gathering
- * Planting and harvesting
- * Raising domesticated animals

Native Americans farmed, gathered, hunted, and fished for thousands of years. Today Americans still engage in these activities. Some do it to feed their families. Some do it for profit or for pay. Some do it for sport.

Subtext A

Gathering and Hunting

Native Americans of the past depended heavily on traditional knowledge of plants, animals, and seasonal cycles.

Later, European arrivals learned to forage for food just as Native Americans did. Once settled, however, they relied on familiar Old World farming techniques, supplementing their diet through hunting and gathering.

Today, while most Americans frequent supermarkets, many still hunt and gather wild foods.

#8 - PHOTO

Cheyenne women picking berries, Lame Deer, Montana
Photograph by George Bird Grinnell
National Museum of the American Indian, N13548

Gathering wild foodstuffs requires time, patience, and knowledge.

#10 - PHOTO

Above left:
Shrimp boat heading out for the fishing grounds, Aransas Pass, Texas, 1997
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration / Department of Commerce

#9 - PHOTO

Rappahannock men hauling fishnet, Chickahominy River, Virginia, 1918
Photograph by Dr. Frank G. Speck
National Museum of the American Indian, N12638

American commercial fisheries were first established in the late 1700s in New England and the eastern Great Lakes. American Indian fishing traditions are thousands of years older.

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American Indians established trade networks to barter fish for other goods. The European American fishing industry employed technology designed to catch larger numbers of fish. The catch was distributed to canneries or dealers who sold the fish to the public.

#11 - PHOTO

Natchez Indians hunting buffalo, from an eyewitness drawing by Antoine du Pratz, published in 1758
National Anthropological Archives, Smithsonian Institution
(45068B)

Before Spanish settlers brought horses to America, Native Americans hunted on foot. By harvesting only what they needed, they preserved populations of migrating bison and other animals.

#13 - PHOTO

Hunting for morel mushrooms, Missouri
Conservation Commission of the State of Missouri

Few Americans now depend solely upon hunting and gathering for their daily food. However, when morels are in season, salmon are running, blackberries are ripening, walnuts are falling, or geese are migrating, many Americans hunt and gather with enthusiasm.

Subtext B

Ranching

Cattle ranching began on the plains of Spain, where it dates back to the 12th century. In the 1500s Spanish explorers established small ranches on Caribbean islands and in Mexico. From there, cattle ranching spread into California, Arizona, and Texas.

The wide-open spaces of the American Southwest allowed ranching on a scale impossible in Europe. After the Civil War, cattle ranching spread across the Great Plains. Today, North America is the world's largest cattle producer.

#14 - PHOTO

California *vaqueros* (cowboys) ply their trade, from a lithograph by L.M. Lefevre, published in 1839, after a drawing by Captain Smyth
Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

B#16 – PHOTO

Buckaroo Myron Smart roping cattle, Ninety-Six Ranch, Paradise Valley, Nevada.
Photograph by Carl Fleischhauer / Library of Congress

#17 - PHOTO

Roundup on a South Texas ranch, about 1920
Courtesy King Ranch Archives, King Ranch, Inc., Kingsville, Texas

Columbus brought horses and cattle on his second voyage to the Americas in 1493. Later European explorers and settlers brought many varieties of livestock and long traditions of animal husbandry.

Subtext C

Crop Farming

Native Americans farmed for thousands of years, cultivating small plots of varied crops. The arrival of English settlers in the 1600s changed farming methods profoundly. The settlers had a choice: adopt the crops grown by their American Indian neighbors (such as maize and squash) or plant the crops they knew (such as wheat and barley).

They chose the familiar, and they needed to grow enough to repay the export companies that had funded their voyages to America. The settlers planted vast tracts of Old World grain that overtook pre-existing native crops.

#18 - PHOTO

“Indian Village of Secoton,” 1585–86
Drawing by John White
Licensed by the Trustees of the British Museum
Copyright the British Museum

Native Americans domesticated thousands of varieties of plants in North America. Many tribes practiced farming, growing enough to feed the community and to keep a reserve for the future. This sketch by English colonist John White depicts an Algonquian village near the Pamlico River in Virginia.

#21 - PHOTO

Mexican Americans harvesting lettuce, California, 1963
Photograph by Burk Uzzle

Many types of farming are still very labor-intensive in spite of advances in technology. For generations, migrant workers have provided low-cost labor at harvest and planting times.

#22 - PHOTO

Bolthouse Farms carrot farm, Bakersfield, California, 2001
Photograph by Greg Iger, courtesy WM. Bolthouse Farms, Inc.

In the 20th century, agribusiness raised single-crop farming to a gargantuan scale. Across states such as Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, and Kansas, fields of corn, wheat, and soybeans stretch farther than the eye can see. The story is repeated with citrus groves in Florida, vegetable farms in California, and fruit orchards in the upper Midwest.

Subtext C-1

Plantation Farming — Sugar and Rice

Two labor-intensive food crops — sugar and rice — created the Southern plantation system, which relied equally on cheap slave labor and fertile soil. Sugarcane depended on African labor. Rice thrived because of African agricultural knowledge.

Spanish and Portuguese colonists introduced sugarcane into the Caribbean in the 1500s. It flourished there during the “triangular trade” of the 18th century: owners of Caribbean cane plantations imported slaves from Africa and exported sugar and molasses to New England, where the molasses was turned into rum and shipped to Africa to trade for more slaves.

Planters in the American South discovered that slaves captured in Sierra Leone and other parts of coastal West Africa were skilled in rice cultivation. Their expertise was quickly appropriated, particularly in coastal Georgia and South Carolina.

#24 - PHOTO

Below:

Workers on a sugarcane plantation, about 1820

From William Clark, “Ten Views in the Island of Antigua” (London, 1823), by permission of the British Library

The taste — and demand — for sugar was established in Europe and traveled to America with the first English and Spanish colonists. By the 1790s, sugarcane was cultivated in Louisiana by thousands of African slaves. The industry was notorious for its harsh treatment of slaves but depended on their labor to maintain profits.

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#25 - PHOTO

Chinese workers on a Louisiana sugar plantation, 1871
Drawing by J.P. Davis
Reproduced from Jacob Baxa and Guntwin Bruhns, "Zucker im
Leben der Volker" (Berlin: Dr. Albert Bartens, 1967), by
permission of Verlag Dr. Albert Bartens

After the United States abolished slavery, sugar plantation
owners replaced slave labor with low-paid migrant
workers.

B#26 - PHOTO

Hoeing rice, South Carolina, about 1900
South Carolina Historical Society

#27 - PHOTO

Getting rice from a plantation on the Savannah River,
Georgia, from a sketch by James E. Taylor
© CORBIS

Sidebar

The Family Farm

The family farm occupies a place close to the heart of American identity.

America’s founders believed that farms were an essential building block for the new republic:

Farmers would own and improve land . . .

Farmers would provide food for their families, and surplus for sale at home and abroad . . .

Farmers would defend their investment against nature, enemies, and political despots . . .

In short, farmers would be good citizens in the new democracy.

Even with the dramatic changes in agriculture — and the democracy — over the past century, the farm endures as an American icon.

#28 - PHOTO

“The Residence of David Twining 1787”

Painting by Edward Hicks

Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Museum, Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, Williamsburg, Virginia

Beginning in 1493, the Old World sent a variety of domesticated animals to the Americas: donkeys, goats, sheep, pigs, geese, chickens — virtually all the animals associated with traditional American farm culture.

#29 - PHOTO

Left:

Spring plowing, New England, 1899

Photograph by George Tingley / Library of Congress

#30 - PHOTO

Dairy farm, Viroqua, Wisconsin, 1942

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Photograph by J. Vachon / Library of Congress

In the past 50 years, agribusiness giants have threatened the survival of the traditional family farm. But the family farm resists extinction: it is still widely imagined and often experienced as a bustling enterprise, a model of teamwork, and a good place to raise a family.

PHOTO
(contemporary farm family)

Farm family, 2002
Photograph © Peter G. Beeson

PORTAL
(apple orchard)
photo credit

Getty Images / Jake Rajs

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Tidbits

#32 - PHOTO

Pork

Both Spanish and English settlers brought hogs to the New World. Spanish settlers found conditions in the Southwest ill suited for large-scale swine production. English farmers brought the pig to the East Coast, then across the Appalachians into the South and the Midwest, where hog farming would grow to an industrial scale.

© CORBIS

B#33 - PHOTO

Tomato

Tomatoes originated in South America, probably in Peru or Ecuador. Europeans long suspected the juicy red fruits of being poisonous, until French and Italian cooks discovered they were not only edible but delicious. By the mid-1800s, French and Italian immigrants made the tomato popular in North America, and vegetable farms in California and the Southeast began producing and canning the fruit in quantity.

© CORBIS

#35 - PHOTO

Corn

Corn was first domesticated in highland Mexico, where centuries of Native American farmers bred it from a tiny wild grain to the plump ears we are familiar with today. Corn became one of North America's leading exports during the 17th and 18th centuries.

© CORBIS

KIOSK 2: Local Flavors

Section 2 banner

Local Flavors

banner photo credit
(L.A. farmers market)

Anne Laskey, Los Angeles Conservancy

Section 2 intro label

Local Flavors

Name a food, name a place: Iowa corn, Idaho potatoes, Texas chili, Florida oranges, Memphis barbecue. So many regions and cities are known by their foods — as distinctive as climate, landscape, or the sound of the local accent.

Food is the bounty of the earth and the work of human hands. It has unrivaled power to connect people with place, to create an identity for a community or region, and to plant an enduring memory for people passing through.

#36 - PHOTO

Victory Jigsaw Puzzle of American Industrial Life
Made by G.J. Hayter & Co., Boscombe, Bournemouth, England

#37 - PHOTO

Top:
Roadside stand, Grandy, North Carolina, 2002
Photograph by Terri L. Cobb

Subsection 1

The Local in Locale

Whether you relish a Georgia peach or a New Mexican pepper, closeness to the source defines freshness. In Maryland, that means blue crabs from the Chesapeake Bay. In California, it's Dungeness crabs from the Pacific coast. Local foods lend distinction to a locale.

The vastness and diversity of America's landscape, climate, and people yield a myriad of foodstuffs and foods. Understanding America's places by exploring local flavors can be a satisfying adventure.

Subtext A

Reading the Roadside

"Tree-ripened," "Vine-ripened," "Catch of the Day," or even "U-Pick-Em" are phrases that tempt the taste buds. Logically, the closer food is to its origin, the fresher it should be.

Because so much of our food is processed, packaged, refrigerated, and re-constituted before we ever taste it, freshness has a particularly powerful appeal. Even "local specialties" are sometimes produced elsewhere and trucked in.

Fields of crops ready for harvest, fishing boats teeming with the day's catch, or roadside stands of fresh fruits and vegetables are the best indicators of what's truly "local."

#38 – PHOTO

Roadside stand, Monomonee River Boom Company,
Marinette, Wisconsin, 1895
Photograph by W.A. Henry / State Historical Society of
Wisconsin

Roadside stands beside a field of produce are the most likely to pay off on the promise of freshness.

#39 - PHOTO

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Birmingham, Alabama, 1936
Photograph by Walker Evans / Library of Congress

#40 - PHOTO

Hanging up chili peppers for drying, New Mexico, 1960s
Photograph by Dick Kent

Native Americans and Hispanics in the Southwest most likely developed the technique of stringing together chili peppers to hang for drying in the hot desert sun.

#41 – PHOTO

At work in a Florida citrus grove, about 1970
Postcard published by Colourpicture

Subtext B

Markets and Marketplaces

Marketplaces that sell locally harvested foods hark back to earlier times when most fresh food came from local sources. The appeal of this “old-fashioned” way of selling is strong; many historical marketplaces have survived and even flourished, seemingly against the odds, in the era of the modern supermarket. Community contact and the chance to share local news are part of the attraction.

#42 – PHOTO

Italian Market, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, about 1985
Postcard published by Art Color Card Distributors, Philadelphia

Open-air markets, sidewalk stands, and stores draw shoppers to South Philadelphia. Markets continue to be important connecting points for people of different culture groups, the long-established and the newly arrived.

#43 – PHOTO

Vegetable and fruit cart, Baltimore, Maryland
Photograph by Steven Cummings

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Produce grown near urban centers has routinely been hauled into town for sale. The tradition remains strong in Baltimore, where vending cries, or “hollers,” advertise fresh melons, crabs, oysters, and sweet corn, sold from horse-drawn wagons.

#44 - PHOTO

French Market, New Orleans, about 1950
Photograph by Robert Holmes / © CORBIS

Italians and Germans, North Africans and Chinese, Spanish and Vietnamese, Irish and English — dozens of nationalities unite under the roof of the French Market. Markets provide a point of entry into local commerce for recent immigrants to New Orleans.

#45 - PHOTO

Pete Hanada and his daughter Judy at Seattle’s Pike Place Market
Photograph by John Stamets

Some individuals carry on family tradition at Pike Place Market. Pete Hanada’s father brought produce to the market in a horse and wagon.

Subtext C

Regional Favorites

Regional specialties often owe more to ethnic heritage than to climate or land.

The prevalence of bratwurst, sauerbraten, and spaetzle in several Great Lakes states is evidence of a strong German heritage. In the same region, the “pasty” (a meat-and-potato-filled turnover) points to Cornish tradition. Kielbasa and pierogies are favorites with large numbers of Polish Americans in Pittsburgh. Most eateries in Dearborn, Michigan, sell Middle Eastern bread, shish kabob, and baba ganoush — no surprise, because the area has one of the largest Middle Eastern populations in North America.

#46 – PHOTO postcard

New England clambake, Orrs Island, Maine, about 1930
Maine Historical Society

The clambake entered Yankee cooking only in the late 1700s, but many New Englanders cherish the legend that Indians taught the colonists to bake clams, lobsters, and other local goodies in rock-lined pits on the beach. Despite claims of unaltered tradition, clambakers have modified both foods and techniques over the years to suit changing circumstances and individual tastes.

#47 – PHOTO postcard

Making burgoo in old Kentucky, about 1900
Kentucky Library and Museum, WSU

Kentucky’s signature food is a soup of many ingredients cooked in sizeable kettles until it thickens into a singular stew. The pioneers who invented the stew called it burgoo. Today veal and chicken usually replace the traditional opossum and squirrel; however, the grand event of burgoo-making is more important than the list of ingredients.

#48 – PHOTO

Cooking gumbo, Cajun Mardi Gras, Mamou, Louisiana,
1980

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Photograph by Philip Gould / © CORBIS

Cajun food became spicy only after the British forcibly removed French settlers called Acadians from Canada and resettled them in southern Louisiana. Cajun “gumbo” was born when French cooking met African okra (which West Africans called “guinbombo”), Native American peppers, and Louisiana seafood.

Subsection 2

Symbol and Reality

Food is often central to the popular imagery of a specific place. Idaho potatoes are firmly linked in the public's mind with golden brown french fries. Sourdough bread symbolizes San Francisco. Deep-dish pizza evokes Chicago. Vermont maple syrup is poured over pancakes everywhere.

Add food to place and an identity is born. And such powerful connections are made more vivid by skillful promotion.

#67 - PHOTO

Top:
National Freshwater Fishing Hall of Fame, Haywood,
Wisconsin, 1984
Photograph by David Graham

#68 – PHOTO
advertising card,
New England Baked Beans,
St. Albans, Vermont

#54 - PHOTO
Boston beans postcard

Baked beans in advertising (left) and on a Boston postcard (below)
Klein Postcard Service, Hyde Park, Massachusetts

Boston (“Bean Town”) usually gets the credit for baked beans, but the dish was popular throughout the colonies. Because Boston baked beans requires a long, slow cooking process, the dish could be prepared a day early, making it a favorite among the faithful who would not work on a day of worship.

vitrine for objects
Subtext A

Image and Identity

Symbols linking foods and places have their own political, promotional, and commercial histories. Some defy logic.

#49 – OBJECT
Kansas breadbasket magnet
#50 – OBJECT
Kansas wheatfields postcard
#51 – OBJECT
Idaho big potato postcard
#52 – OBJECT
Idaho baked potato key ring

Postcards, key rings, and refrigerator magnets reinforce the connection between food and place.

#53 – OBJECT
Traverse City magnet

The region’s two million-plus cherry trees give Traverse City, Michigan, rights to the title “Cherry Capital of the World.” About three-fourths of the nation’s tart cherry crop is produced here. This variety is perfect for pies, preserves, jellies, and juices.

#55 – OBJECT
Maryland crab trivet

#56 – OBJECT
Georgia license plate
#57 – OBJECT
Atlanta key ring w/peach
#58 – OBJECT
Georgia postcards

The peach didn’t become Georgia’s official state fruit until 1995, but the public’s association of the state with the fruit dates back at least 100 years. Around 1900, when many Southern states were known for growing peaches, Ty Cobb, a tough young Georgian baseball player, acquired the nickname “the Georgia Peach.” When Cobb was pictured

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eating peaches, attesting to their energizing powers, Georgia acquired a claim that no other state could match.

#59 - OBJECT

Hawaii pineapple magnet

Hawaii stopped producing pineapples for the American canned fruit market some 25 years ago, when rising real-estate prices made large-scale farming less attractive for landowners. Yet the pineapple endures as a powerful symbol that still evokes the islands' distinctive culture.

#61 – OBJECT

Dutch Oven pin

#62 – OBJECT

Fry Sauce pin

#63 – OBJECT

Funeral Potatoes pin

#64 – OBJECT

Green Jell-O pin

#65 – OBJECT

My Favorite Foods pin

When someone says “Utah,” what food do you think of? Organizers for the 2002 Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City used collectible pins to showcase some favorite local foods. Fry sauce is a mixture of ketchup and mayonnaise served with French fries; Utahans eat more green Jell-O per capita than most other Americans.

#69 – OBJECT

San Francisco Sourdough bread bag

#70 – OBJECT

Dakota growers box

#71 – OBJECT

burlap sack, Whitley's

Virginia Peanuts

When food companies market local favorites to other parts of the country, the packaging often highlights the place of origin to impart an air of authenticity.

#60 – OBJECT

Wisconsin cheesehead hats

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(hung next to mirror)

Wisconsin cheesehead hats
Try one on!

Wisconsin's proud identity as a leading dairy state led Green Bay Packers fans to turn an insult into an emblem of pride by adopting the "cheesehead" as a symbol of their devotion. Is this the power of food and place, or simply — as ads claim — "the power of cheese"?

PHOTO: cheesehead

Green Bay Packers fan, 2002
Green Bay Packers / Harmann Studios

B-Sidebar

Food Monuments

Corn palaces, butter molded into the likeness of a fully grown cow, landmarks featuring gigantic renderings of local foods — these exclamation points on the landscape display pride and make sure we don't forget the food we saw and where we saw it.

#66 - PHOTO

Corn Palace, Mitchell, South Dakota
Mitchell Chamber of Commerce

The Mitchell Corn Palace was first decorated on its present site in 1921. Every year since, it has featured fresh murals fashioned from corn and other grains. South Dakota is among America's top corn-producing states.

Tidbits

#77A – PHOTO

(outside: slice of pizza)

#77B – PHOTO

(inside: pie and pizzeria)

Chicago Deep-Dish Pizza

In the 1970s, as pizza became America's favorite food, the phrases "Chicago-style" and "deep-dish" identified a pizza subspecies that featured more dough, more sauce, more everything. In contrast, "New York-style" came to refer to pizza that could be easily folded in half and eaten with one hand. The names of the places helped sell pizzas in parlors from coast to coast.

Pizzeria: © Kelly-Mooney Photography / CORBIS
Slice: © CORBIS

#78 – PHOTO

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Philadelphia Cheese Steak

Pat's King of Steaks is home to the Philadelphia cheese steak, a sandwich invented in the 1930s at a stand operated by the Olivieri family in the city's Italian Market. The layered mound of rib-eye steak, cheese spread, and onions sizzling on a grill is at once Italian-American, Philadelphian, and working-class — just like the neighborhood where it originated.

© Bob Krist / CORBIS

#79 - PHOTO

Frybread Taco

The Navajo taco is served at powwows, fairs, festivals, feast days, and church suppers. Though not a traditional food, it has become so associated with Indians everywhere that even some Native people think of it as an “Indian” dish. The Navajo taco combines a pan-Indian food, frybread, with toppings that are characteristic of tacos in northern Mexico. Its ingredients — wheat flour, lard, beef, lettuce, and tomatoes — originated in Mexico and Europe and illustrate the sharing of food customs.

© Catherine Karnow / CORBIS

KIOSK 3: “Dynamic Delivery”

section 3 banner

Dynamic Delivery

banner photo credit
(orange juice factory)

© CORBIS

Section 3 intro label

Dynamic Delivery

The Industrial Revolution restructured America and the American diet.

Late in the 1700s, 3.8 million of America’s four million people lived on farms, producing most of their own food. But the 1800s saw a boom in new industries: mining, factories, metalworking. Cities grew. Many immigrants employed in these new industries depended on others to supply their food.

A trend that began before the Civil War accelerated: fewer farmers on larger and more efficient farms produced enough to feed growing cities. This intensive food production — and delivery across the country — was made possible by dynamic technological advances in every related field, from preservation to transportation to marketing to home cooking.

#94 NEW – PHOTO

Top:
Cans in a food-processing plant
© Steve Miller; Eye Ubiquitous / CORBIS

#80 ALT – PHOTO
[national brands on rural
landscape, ca. 1980]

Below:
Brand-name landscape
Courtesy The National Corn Growers Association

#88 – PHOTO
[on transparent panel]

Bottom:

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Mrs. Earl Warren, wife of the governor of California, labels her stock of preserves with her son, Robert, 1941
Library of Congress

Subsection 1

The Preservation Revolution

Native Americans and early settlers sugared, salted, dried, and smoked their foods — methods of preservation that had developed over centuries. Then in the 19th century European Americans added methods of canning and cooling.

At the same time, transportation was evolving: first railways and steamboats, then highways, truck lines, and airplanes. As the technologies of food preservation and transportation converged, they changed the way farmers farmed and Americans ate.

Subtext A

Canning

In 1819 William Underwood brought a French innovation to America: preserving cooked food by sealing it in airtight vessels. Underwood began by packing fruits, pickles, and condiments in glass jars, converting to sturdy tin canisters by the 1830s. By the 1870s America was packing more kinds of food in larger quantities than any other country. Entrepreneurs developed methods for industrial-scale canning, and by World War II, the canned food industry was booming. Today, Americans consume more than 200 million cans of food and drink each day.

four cans on shelf:

#96 – OBJECT
Del Monte fruit can

When the California Gold Rush hit in 1849, San Francisco's population increased from 5,000 to 35,000 in one year. Francis Cutting saw opportunity in the scramble for food. He began feeding miners with packed pickles and

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canned fruits and vegetables. Eventually his thriving business would acquire the brand name Del Monte.

#98 – OBJECT
Eagle Brand Condensed Milk

#100 – OBJECT
Campbell's soup can

#102 – OBJECT Heinz can

#97 – PHOTO
Borden ad

Ad for Eagle Brand Condensed Milk, about 1890
Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archives Center, National
Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution

Gail Borden set out to develop a nutritious preserved milk that would not spoil. His commercial break came with the opportunity to provide condensed milk as field rations for Union soldiers in the Civil War.

#99 - PHOTO

Campbell's Pork and Beans assembly line, about 1900
Campbell Soup Company Archives

Joseph Campbell began canning tomatoes in Camden, New Jersey, in 1869. He sought to build his company on a commitment to provide affordable, nutritious, and convenient food.

#101 - PHOTO

H.J. Heinz Company Pickles and Food Products,
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, about 1900
Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archives Center, National
Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution

Henry J. Heinz began by bottling horseradish in a Pittsburgh plant in 1869. Soon he was turning out pickles and ketchup, making numerous out-of-season ingredients available year round.

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#82 – PHOTO, can label,
Oro Brand yellow peaches,
Fontana & Co., San Francisco

#83 – PHOTO, can label,
Joan of Arc French red kidney beans,
Illinois Canning Co., Hoopeston,
Illinois, 1896

#84 – PHOTO, can label,
A. Anderson Canning Company,
Camden, New Jersey, about 1900

[group label for
#82, 83, 84]

Bottom:
Can labels, 1890–1900
Warshaw Collection of Business Americana, Archives Center, National
Museum of American History, Behring Center, Smithsonian Institution

subtext

Home Canning

Customarily, most canning was done at home, “putting up” summer harvests for winter meals. During World War II, the U.S. government promoted home canning, to improve citizens’ diets and to make efficient use of surplus fruit and vegetables. Some small commercial canneries were made available for community use.

#87 - PHOTO

Mrs. Frank Jacobs canning pears, Madison County,
Alabama, 1941
Library of Congress

#89 – PHOTO

Community cannery, Jeffersontown, Kentucky, 1943
Library of Congress

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Following World War II, national companies pushed aside local canneries to gain control of the market for canned food. In 1940, there were more than 10,000 canneries in the U.S. By 1950, there were fewer than 1,000. Home canning was relegated to near-hobby status.

vitrine for objects
#85 and #90 / 91:

#85 – OBJECT

Klik-it canning lids, about 1950s

John Mason developed the Mason jar — a glass jar with sealable lid and metal ring — in 1880, leading the way to a more varied diet throughout the year for many families with home gardens.

#90 – OBJECT

A-B-C of Canning, 1942

OR

Crown Home Canning Book, 1943

OR

#91 – OBJECT

Kerr home canning book

Subtext B

Refrigeration

Natural ice, and then ice and salt were the 19th century's refrigerants, used in specially designed boxcars to ship fruits, vegetables, and meats from the Midwest to the rest of the country. This caused a decided change in the kinds of foods available to Americans. The development of mechanical refrigeration later in the century simplified the process of shipping and storing food.

#103 – PHOTO

Harvesting ice in Connecticut, 1907
The Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford, Connecticut

Harvesting natural ice from clear lakes in New England and shipping it to warmer ports such as Charleston was a profitable industry following the Revolutionary War.

#105 – PHOTO

Refrigerated warehouse, Washington, D.C., 1942
Library of Congress

A refrigerated railcar needs a refrigerated warehouse to receive a shipment. The first commercial mechanical refrigeration unit was installed in a Louisiana warehouse in 1868. By 1901 there were 600 mechanically refrigerated warehouses across the country.

Sidebar

Frozen Foods

During a 1914 expedition to Labrador, Clarence Birdseye watched Eskimo fishermen bury their catch in ice and retrieve it, good as new, weeks later. Birdseye developed a way to freeze fish commercially in 1925, but few Americans could store frozen food at home.

Then, at the outset of World War II, the military ordered 70 million pounds of frozen foods. These orders, and the fact that frozen foods weren't rationed during the war years, led to rapid improvements in processing methods and helped companies such as General Foods and Swanson's to grow. After the war, most American homes had freezers — though these were usually just large enough for a quart of ice cream.

#106 - PHOTO

Birdseye frozen food display, 1950s
Culinary Archives and Museum, Johnson & Wales University

#107 – OBJECT
frozen food packaging

The first frozen prepared foods were marketed in 1951, typically chicken, turkey, and beef pot pies. TV dinners — meals packaged on a tray, for easy dining in front of the television — came on the market in 1954, intended to accommodate another new phenomenon sweeping the nation.

Subsection 2

Distribution and Marketing

Food preservation and national distribution led to the self-serve grocery store. Advertising, especially on television, influenced customers' buying habits. Many shoppers no longer based their choices on loyalty to local bakers and butchers — loyalties now went to brand names.

#108 – PHOTO [new]

Purchasing goods in a general store, Wagoner County, Oklahoma, 1939

Photograph by Russell Lee / © CORBIS

A far cry from “self-serve”: shoppers in the general merchandise stores of the 19th century gave storekeepers a list and waited for them to fill the order. Stores bought bulk goods and dispensed them in smaller units. Before the era of brand names, flour was sold from giant bins, labeled simply “flour.”

#110 – PHOTO

Shopping at Piggly Wiggly, the first self-service “super market,” Memphis, Tennessee, 1918

Photograph by Clifford H. Poland / © CORBIS

Clarence Saunders of Memphis, Tennessee, developed the first large-scale, self-service grocery store in 1916. Brand names like Purina filled the shelves, alongside less famous local brands.

Subtext A

Building Brands

Self-serve markets put the power of choice in consumers' hands, a landmark shift from the days of the general store. Following World War II, food companies used national advertising campaigns to imprint brand names in consumers' minds.

#115 – PHOTO
Betty Crocker image

Betty Crocker in 1936
Courtesy of General Mills Archives

Factory-produced foods sold better with the help of personalities created in an advertising agency. Companies developed characters such as Aunt Jemima (1893), the Campbell Kids (1901), Mr. Peanut (1918), the Jolly Green Giant (1925), Betty Crocker (1936), and Uncle Ben (about 1945).

GRAPHIC: Clabber Girl
image from booklet
[no label]

in vitrine:

#114 – OBJECT
Pillsbury dough boy figure

OBJECT – Clabber Girl
Baking Powder booklet
(1931)

Subsection 3

Cooking Modern, Looking Modern

It's impossible to say which came first — convenience foods or modern kitchens. The prepared food industry and the appliance industry developed hand-in-hand.

New methods of food preservation, new sources of power such as gas and electricity, and a flood of new food products — not to mention hot and cold running water — transformed the American kitchen. Though change began in the mid-1800s, the post-World War II industrial boom revolutionized the kitchen with a raft of major appliances and minor gadgets.

#121 – PHOTO

From “Recipes for Your Hotpoint Electric Range,” about 1950

#88 – PHOTO

[on transparent panel, label repeated from other side]

Below:

Mrs. Earl Warren, wife of the governor of California, labels her stock of preserves with her son, Robert, 1941
Library of Congress

Subtext A

The Range

In colonial times, cooking took place at the hearth. By the 1860s, many American women progressed to iron stoves. Fueled by wood or coal, stoves demanded continual stoking, poking, and cleaning. Temperatures varied by the minute, requiring a cook's constant attention and limiting the kinds of food he or she could prepare.

Gas and electricity revolutionized the stove. By 1890, the U.S. had 24 factories producing gas stoves. Thermostats, which regulate heat automatically, were introduced in the 1920s (although consumers did not trust the device at first).

Today, a high-powered chef's range in the kitchen is equivalent to a high-performance sports car in the garage.

#119 - PHOTO

A colonial kitchen
© Bettmann / CORBIS

The center of the early kitchen was the fireplace, and a meal was usually cooked in one pot over the open fire. Hearth cooking was dangerous, difficult, and slow.

#120 – PHOTO

Below:
Wood-burning stove in a Colorado miner's cabin, about 1880
Denver Public Library, Western History Collection

Wood- and coal-burning stoves allowed cooks to prepare a variety of foods simultaneously. Many families used these stoves well into the 20th century, before gas and electric ranges became plentiful and inexpensive. Even today, some families cook their meals with wood or coal.

#122 – PHOTO

“Suggestions and Recipes for Home Cooking,” Gas & Electric Foundation, 1930

Utility companies encouraged Americans to buy gas and electric appliances. Some even sold appliances as well as the power to run them.

Subtext B

The Refrigerator

In the early 1800s, Maryland farmer Thomas Moore invented the “ice box,” an insulated container requiring a few pounds of ice each day to keep food cold at home. By 1895, horse-drawn carts were delivering ice to houses every day. Home ice delivery continued into the 20th century, until the Kelvinator and other electrified coolers

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replaced the icebox. By the 1940s, mechanical refrigerators were as common in American kitchens as running water.

#123 - PHOTO

Horse-drawn ice cart, Washington, D.C., about 1920
Library of Congress

#124 – PHOTO

The first Frigidaire, 1921
© Bettmann / CORBIS

#125 – PHOTO

“How to Enjoy Your GE Refrigerator/Freezer,” 1951

Subtext C

It Slices, It Dices

In the years following World War II, technology promised answers to many American dreams — including spending less time in the kitchen. The postwar homemaker was a perfect marketing target for gadgets that claimed to attack the drudgery of slicing, chopping, and grating. The Mouli Grater, the Blitzhacker, the Acme juice extractor, and the Veg-O-Matic were sold through county fairs and hardware stores. Radio and television promotions promised quick, precise, almost effortless food preparation.

objects in vitrine:

#126 – OBJECT

Mouli grater

#127 – OBJECT

Blitzhacker food chopper box

#128 – OBJECT

Bean-X bean slicer with box

OR

Vitex fruit and vegetable corer
with box

OBJECT – Veg-O-Matic

OBJECT – Acme safety grater
with packaging

Subtext D

Gone Electric

Modern electric appliances grace the countertops of most homes, and prepared foods — requiring minimal mixing, heating, or zapping — fill the pantries. Advertising for such tools and foods has long featured cozy images of home cooking and family meals. While efficient food preparation is a part of modern life, family meals often fall prey to busy schedules.

#129 – PHOTO
(graphic of blender)

From “340 Recipes for the Waring Blender,” 1947

GRAPHIC (Veg-O-Matic
chopper options)

From Veg-O-Matic instruction booklet, 1963
© Popeil Brothers, Inc.

#130 – PHOTO

“Sunbeam Portable Electric Cookery,” about 1970

Tidbits

#131 - PHOTO
Label from can of succotash
[no credit]

Succotash

Succotash — a mix of corn and lima beans — was first canned early in the 19th century. It is a dish rooted in the traditions of Native Americans, who grew beans and corn together in one patch.

In the South, African American and white settlers both learned from Native Americans. We can taste the resulting fusion in stews, compotes, corn pudding, pumpkin pie, hominy grits, and more.

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#132A – PHOTO
(outside: glass of milk)
#132B – PHOTO
(inside: milkman)

Dairy

Beginning in 1860, milk companies used insulated, refrigerated train cars to transport milk from rural stations to cities, then made home deliveries by refrigerated wagon. When milk companies started processing dairy foods, the milkman supplied cream, butter, and cheese, as well as milk, in refrigerated trucks. Dairy companies phased out the neighborhood milkman when supermarkets offered pricing and variety the milkman couldn't match.

Glass of milk: © CORBIS
Milkman: © Bettmann / CORBIS

#133 - PHOTO

Popcorn

Does popcorn inspire invention? Since 1900, corn-popping technology has moved from metal pots and wire baskets, to Jiffy Pop's expandable aluminum-foil pan, to electric corn-poppers and microwaveable popcorn. Most popcorn is now grown in Nebraska and Indiana, but varieties from the Southwest — where archaeologists have found popcorn more than 5,000 years old in a New Mexico cave — find customers across the country.

© CORBIS

PORTAL
(grocery aisle)
photo credit

© Mark Tuschman / CORBIS

KIOSK 4: A Festival of Feasts

section 4 banner

A Festival of Feasts

banner photo credit
(diner counter)

Photograph by Ron Saari

Section 1 intro label

A Festival of Feasts

America hosts a vast array of public events where eating is the primary activity but not the purpose of the gathering. Think fish fries, clambakes, lobster boils, chili cook-offs, prayer breakfasts, political dinners, wiener roasts, potluck suppers — the list is practically endless.

“Eating out” has become a favored American pastime. It rarely means eating alone. Food draws people together. Sharing meals has a way of deepening relationships and reveals much about the communities we value.

NEW PHOTO

Top:
Cooking ribs for the World Championship Barbecue
Cooking Contest, Memphis, Tennessee
Courtesy Memphis in May International Festival, Inc.

#135 – PHOTO

Patriotic picnic, Denver, Colorado, about 1910
Photograph by Charles S. Lillybridge
Courtesy Colorado Historical Society

Themed picnics are a common way to strengthen community identity and relationships. A spirit of patriotism may unify people across political or cultural lines, but nothing brings folks together like food.

Subsection 1

Serving Up Our Identities

What do the World Catfish Festival in Belzoni, Mississippi, the Japanese Festival in St. Louis, Missouri, and a neighborhood picnic all have in common? Food, of course. But there's more — the identity factor.

Thousands of food festivals attract millions of Americans every year. Some are small; some sprawl across fairgrounds. But each celebrates some kind of identity — a cultural heritage, a hometown, a local delicacy, a common cause. When food is served in public, it says something about who we are.

Subtext A / C

Food Festivals

Festivals focus on food, on ethnic heritage, or on local agriculture, but their real function is to build a sense of community. Festivals like Latino Fiesta Day in Tampa, Florida, or Old Settlers Day (celebrating Swedish roots) in Bishop Hill, Illinois, are not primarily about food, but eating is always a key element, because food is central to how people define themselves.

#137 – PHOTO
(Yuma Lettuce Days)

#136 – PHOTO
(Apple Blossom Festival)

Displays of produce at Yuma Lettuce Days, Arizona
Yuma Main Street, Inc.

Queen's Court, Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival,
Winchester, Virginia, 1924
Winchester Printers, Inc.

Since 1924, the Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival has paid yearly tribute to Virginia's apple-growing belt. Other festivals are much newer, such as Yuma Lettuce Days,

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which celebrates the region as the world's leading producer of winter lettuce.

#138 - PHOTO

Cooks at the Gilroy Garlic Festival, Gilroy, California, 1984
© Robert Holmes / CORBIS

#139 - PHOTO

Lamb Days, Fountain Green, Utah
Photograph by Carol Edison, 1984
Courtesy Utah Arts Council Folk Arts Program

Every July since 1932, Fountain Green has hosted a celebration of local sheep-farming. This homecoming includes parades, contests, and entertainment, but the central activity is the preparation and enjoyment of pit-roasted lamb.

Subtext B

Barbecue

Barbecue, or barbeque, or bar-b-cue, or b-b-q has even more forms than it has spellings. In places where barbecue is an event and not just a verb, they all mean community.

Different parts of the South claim the invention of barbecue, and each insists on the authenticity of the local version: vinegar sauces in North Carolina, the sweet tomato sauce of Memphis, the peppery bite from Texas. Mutton replaces pork in Kentucky. In Texas, cattle ranchers use barbecue techniques for slow-cooking beef brisket.

#141 - PHOTO

Barbecue cook-off, Memphis, Tennessee
Memphis in May International Festival, Inc.

The unofficial capital of barbecue in America, Memphis has more than 60 commercial "pits" in operation.

#142 - PHOTO

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Barbecue Festival poster, Lexington, North Carolina
The Barbecue Festival, Inc.

Barbecue is a traditional part of public and private entertainment in many regions of the country. While barbecue in the West typically focuses on beef, pork is the barbecue of choice in the South. Barbecued ribs are part of African American food traditions that began among slaves on Southern plantations and moved to Northern and Midwestern cities during later migrations.

#143 - PHOTO

Kutztown Pennsylvania German Festival
The Kutztown Festival

Celebrating the lifestyle of the Pennsylvania Dutch in Berks County, Pennsylvania, the Kutztown Pennsylvania German Festival attracts more than 100,000 people each year. Among the most popular features are family-style suppers offering such foods as country chicken and ham, ox roast, schnitz and knepp (dried apples and dumplings), and shoofly pie.

B #145 – PHOTO

Visitors examine raw peanuts and peanut-harvesting equipment, National Peanut Festival, Dothan, Alabama
Alabama Peanut Producers Association

#146 – PHOTO

Three generations of cooks make *kolaces*, Tabor Czech Days, Tabor, South Dakota
Photograph by Becky Herman
Tabor Area Chamber of Commerce, Inc.

Kolaces (pronounced ko-la-chees) are meat- or fruit-filled pastries.

Subsection 2

Eating Out

American eateries reveal a lot about who we are and where we came from. From political debates in colonial taverns, to the “power lunches” of the 1990s, to the enterprising spirit of immigrant restaurant owners, eateries have long been at the center of public events that shape American culture.

Subtext A

Birth of the American Restaurant

Restaurants as we know them today did not exist until the mid-1800s. In colonial days, most people ate at home, while travelers relied upon taverns or inns. The food was simple. The atmosphere was often crude and boisterous.

Until the 19th century, fine dining took place only in the homes of the elite. The rise of an American upper class that admired European refinement and French cookery provided the clientele for America’s earliest elegant restaurants: Antoine’s in New Orleans (1840) and the Palmer House in Chicago (1871).

#147 - PHOTO

Tavern and stagecoach, 1795
From Isaac Weld, “Travels through the United States of North America . . .” (London, 1799)
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, Yale University

Early establishments afforded food and rest for travelers and the opportunity to gather and socialize for local men. Guests were offered whatever food the proprietor had prepared. Genteel manners were not required.

#148 - PHOTO

Ladies-only luncheon at Delmonico’s, New York City,
1902
The Museum of the City of New York

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Delmonico's was one of the first restaurants to promote dining for women unaccompanied by men. By the late 1800s ladies' luncheons were widely popular. Opened by Swiss-born brothers in 1831, Delmonico's employed a French chef, who cooked on newly developed stoves, and featured tables set with impeccably clean white linen cloths and fine china.

#165 - PHOTO

Juke joint and bar near Belle Glade, Florida, 1941
Photograph by Marion Post Wolcott / Library of Congress

In the racially segregated South, some black entrepreneurs opened roadhouses selling food and drink, sometimes out of their own homes. Others owned "juke joints" that offered music, dancing, drinking, and limited food service — often fried chicken made by women in the community.

#164 - PHOTO

Parthenon Restaurant, Aliquippa, Pennsylvania, 1942
Photograph by Jack Delano / Library of Congress

Many restaurants double as community centers for people who share cultural traditions, including language and food. Greek Americans in Aliquippa, one of Pennsylvania's biggest steel-towns, met at the Parthenon.

#163 - PHOTO

Chinese restaurant, New York City, 1993
© David Turnley / CORBIS

In the 1850s, large numbers of Chinese laborers came to the West Coast to build the railroads and toil in mines, logging camps, and factories. Many settled in Chinatowns within major cities and opened "chow chow" eateries. At first many Chinese eateries catered only to Chinese tastes but soon modified an ever-growing number of traditional dishes to serve a broader clientele.

Subtext B

Meals and Wheels

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America's westward expansion opened a new chapter in the story of eating out. Bold young entrepreneurs followed fast on the heels of pioneers, miners, soldiers, and railroad builders, ready to feed them all. The eateries they created were a testament to American ingenuity.

Stagecoach to train coach, paddle-wheel to automobile, Americans have long been dedicated travelers. American mobility may be the most important ingredient in the making of American food.

Subtext B-1

Railroad Dining

When the first transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, entrepreneurs were already solving the problem of feeding long-distance travelers.

#149 - PHOTO

Pullman dining car, about 1900
Library of Congress

George Pullman built the first complete dining car in 1868. Pullman dining cars became famous for their service: chefs picked up fresh ingredients along the way, and passengers were treated to California figs, Oregon Dungeness crabs, and Idaho trout. Many Pullman dining cars were rolling examples of Victorian luxury, with Turkish carpets, tufted velvet chairs, and distinctive china.

#150 - PHOTO

Harvey House restaurant with Harvey Girls, 1926
Kansas State Historical Society

To serve travelers at railway stops, Englishman Fred Harvey partnered with the Atcheson, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad to create America's first restaurant chain, the Harvey House. Harvey's restaurants assured fast service and quality food. Orders were wired ahead so meals were ready when the train pulled into the station. At a time when there were few women in the West, Harvey hired 100,000

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young women from eastern cities to work in his restaurants as “Harvey Girls.” Their respectability and friendly efficiency helped to civilize many frontier towns.

Subtext B-2

On the Road

With 26 million cars crisscrossing America’s plains, deserts, forests, and mountains by 1930, roadside food was an obvious investment for entrepreneurs. The roadscape was dotted with eateries of every shape and size. Diners, cafeterias, soda shops, taco stands, luncheonettes, barbecue stands, drive-ins, ice cream parlors, and new chain restaurants blossomed.

#151 – PHOTO

Making a sundae in an ice cream parlor
Library of Congress

#152 - PHOTO

Drive-in surrounded by cars

Drive-in
University of Southern California, Regional History Center,
Whittington Collection

#153 – PHOTO [NEW IMAGE]

Car hop serving customer

© Bettmann / CORBIS

#155 - PHOTO

Lunch counter
with people eating

Lunch counter in New York City, 1937

© Bettmann / CORBIS

Lunch counter slang: “Gimme Adam and Eve on a raft, no axle grease, a bowl of red, a cuppa java, shoot one from the South, and ice on the rice.” Translation: “Give me ham and eggs on toast with no butter, a bowl of chili, a cup of

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coffee, a Coca-Cola with lots of syrup, and rice pudding with ice cream.”

#161 - PHOTO

The first McDonald's, Des Plaines, Illinois, 1955
McDonald's Corporation

“Fast food” debuted as America's two-income family and two-car culture approached full speed. Chain restaurants developed ingredients, equipment, and service methods to turn out menu items within minutes of ordering, at very affordable prices.

#160 – PHOTO

An early White Castle, Columbus, Ohio, 1929
White Castle Management Co.

Founded in 1921, White Castle hamburger stands promised uniformity, familiarity, and cleanliness — a recipe for fast-food success.

Sidebar

The American Diner

Diners are all about food, mood, and attitude, with a design rooted deep in Americana. “Classic” diners are retired railroad dining or kitchen cars, modified to serve as stationary restaurants. The American diner is an all-purpose, all-places, all-hours venue. Diners offered a night out, entertainment, adventure — and everybody was welcome. New gadgets like the jukebox, soda machine, and soft ice cream dispensers attracted an untapped market with mobility and money to spend: kids in cars.

#156 - PHOTO
Rosie’s Diner

Rosie’s Diner
Photograph by Darlene Kaczmarczyk and Jerry Berta

case for diner object:

#158 - PHOTO
Close-up of diner juke box

#159 – OBJECT
diner plate

At a diner, the coffee pot is never empty, bacon and eggs are sold around the clock, and a fresh apple pie is ready to serve.

Photograph by Ronald C. Saari

Tidbits

#168 - PHOTO

Nachos

Nachos, supposedly concocted at a State Fair of Texas concession stand in 1964, are now a staple at Tex-Mex restaurants.

© CORBIS

#169 - PHOTO

Hot Dogs

As early as the Civil War, German Americans ate frankfurters, a sausage containing beef and/or pork invented in Frankfurt, Germany. Frankfurters were served on buns in St. Louis in the 1880s and with lots of condiments at the New York Polo Grounds in 1901. But it wasn't until Nathan Handwerker, a Polish shoemaker, opened a stand at Coney Island in 1916 that the "hot dog" took off. In Kansas, they like their "dogs" with melted cheese and mustard; in Chicago, they're served in poppyseed buns; in Texas, the corn dog is king; and North Carolina loves chili dogs.

Minnesota Historical Society

#170 - PHOTO

Fortune Cookies

"Chinese" fortune cookies are an American invention — possibly the brainchild of Makoto Hagiwara, who served cookies with notes at his Japanese Tea Garden in San Francisco in 1914. Today, most fortune cookies are made in Queens, New York.

© CORBIS

KIOSK 5: “Home Cooking”

section 5 banner

Home Cooking

banner photo credit
(Thanksgiving turkey)

© FOODPIX / Brian Leatart

Section 5 intro label

Home Cooking

Food is central to culture. Culture is central to identity. Ideas about food, culture, and identity originate in the home.

When food is prepared, enjoyed, discussed, and remembered, it overflows with lessons for life. It is seasoned with messages about family origins and its place in the world. These messages feed a family’s own food traditions and shape mealtime etiquette.

Traditions pass naturally and invisibly from one generation to the next. Mealtime at home opens a window to the past and helps define the future.

#192 - PHOTO

Top:
Mother and daughters cooking, about 1990
© Steve Chenn / CORBIS

#171 - PHOTO

Below:
Cochiti Pueblo family, Cochiti Pueblo, New Mexico, about 1920
Photograph by Odd S. Halseth
National Museum of the American Indian, N32987

#179 - PHOTO

A priest blesses baskets of food in the Polish community on the day before Easter, Buffalo, New York, 1943
Photograph by Marjory Collins / Library of Congress

Subsection 1

Learning to Cook

Cooks acquire skills and recipes from many sources: instruction from Grandmother, classes in school, soup can labels, helping parents or friends fix Sunday dinner. The cook's collection of notes, notions, and techniques likely reflects family traditions, economic circumstances, and prevailing attitudes.

Ethnic traditions and family lore are learned at home. But cooking classes, originally aimed at the middle class, promoted meat-and-potatoes cooking and a standardization of the American diet.

PHOTO

A mother teaches her daughter to cook
© CORBIS

Subtext A

In the Family

Americans typically acquire cooking skills first through observation and imitation, and then through trial and error. The basics of food preparation are observed during childhood and applied in kitchens later in life. Years later, a telephone call allows for a home-cooking refresher course and re-affirms the bonds of friendship and family.

#190 - PHOTO

African American cook, about 1864
National Archives and Records Administration

Cooking traditions are passed down through generations, parent to child. African women brought their own traditions to food preparation in the antebellum South. Through the years, African American cooking traditions helped to define Southern cooking.

#193 - PHOTO

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Frances Hurley documents her mother making “soggy coconut cake,” about 1979

Photograph by Harlan Hambright

Some families actively preserve the cooking wisdom of their elders. The children of Mrs. T.A. “Mamoo” Lewis of Knoxville, Tennessee, filmed their mother making a family favorite: soggy coconut cake. Working without a recipe, Mamoo’s painstaking preparation included tasting the milk of the coconut to check its sweetness.

Subtext B

Cookbooks and Classes

Recipe books evolved from 17th- and 18th-century “household manuals,” which instructed housewives in everything from baking bread to making soap. Popularized in the late 1800s, cooking classes emphasized new “scientific” methods and healthful eating.

Cookbooks and classroom instruction reflected social class and traditions, available ingredients, and common ways of thinking about foodstuffs. Neither reflects how “average” Americans actually prepared their daily meals, but both demonstrate the American devotion to self-improvement through education.

B #199 – PHOTO
Photonumber:
MC269-VI-36-18-14

Above:
Boys in cooking class, North Bennet Street Industrial School, Boston, about 1940
Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

Students in cooking classes were mostly girls and young women, preparing for their roles as full-time wives and mothers. Some boys, mostly working-class, also learned to cook through formal instruction, to prepare for jobs in restaurant kitchens.

#196 – PHOTO
Irma Rombauer
Photonumber: MC449-5-4
#195 – PHOTO
Fannie Farmer
Photonumber: PC1-186-1
#197 – PHOTO
Julia Child
Photonumber: PC1-44-1

Below, left to right:
Irma Rombauer (right) reading from her cookbook, “The Joy of Cooking,” about 1943
Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

Fannie Farmer, about 1910

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Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

Julia Child on the set of her cooking show, 1970
© Bettmann / CORBIS

Cooking instruction reveals the concerns and interests of its time, from technology and method to class, race, and gender roles.

Fannie Farmer was known as the “Mother of Level Measurements,” and her emphasis on scientific principles in “The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book” (1896) contributed to the growing domestic science movement. Irma Rombauer joined practicality and indulgence in “The Joy of Cooking” (1931): “I have attempted to make palatable dishes with simple means and to lift everyday cooking out of the commonplace.” Julia Child’s “The French Chef” debuted on television in 1963. Child used emerging technology such as the blender and food processor to teach Americans how easy French cooking could be.

#198 - PHOTO

Cooking class, Blaine School, Minnesota, 1900
Minnesota Historical Society

In the 1890s, “domestic science” and “home economics” were terms that signaled a new scientific approach to cooking. Emphasizing nutrition, safety, and consistent results, the domestic science movement profoundly affected American cooking. Cooking schools and classes sprang up. High schools and colleges established departments of home economics devoted to family nutrition and modernized cooking methods.

inside case:

#200 – OBJECT
compiled cookbook

The Recipe Collection: Cooking as Autobiography

Cookbooks and recipe boxes can be treasures — memoirs of loved ones that reveal where they came from, where they wanted to go, and whom they hoped to become.

Gathered over a year or a lifetime, such collections are both history and a record of family meals. Like leftovers, such memories can improve in flavor over time. Recipes and personal cookbooks reveal details of life steeped in traditions, shaped by family and community ties.

Each of these “autobiographies” is a chapter in the story of America’s diverse people.

IMAGES – recipes
on cards

Subsection 2

Arts of Hospitality

The way food is served elevates special occasions in a home. People reserve distinctive objects, such as china or silverware, for guests. A tablecloth that otherwise stays folded in a drawer reinforces the importance of holiday meals. Strict attention to manners formalizes the ordinary etiquette of the family meal.

#173 - PHOTO

John Little dining room, San Francisco, about 1875
Courtesy of The Society of California Pioneers

Etiquette books subtly reminded 19th-century women that silver, china, glassware, and linen displayed family status. Rituals associated with food are very slow to change, so households continue to treasure china and silver, even if they seldom use them.

#178 - OBJECT

Greek coffee cup and saucer

A family's ethnic or regional background molds individual members' connections with food. In social situations, families of Greek and Turkish heritage serve traditionally strong coffee in cups and saucers used only for that purpose.

#180 - PHOTO

Below:
Club meeting/dinner in New Orleans, about 1999
Courtesy of Audrey E. Steward

For parties or special occasions where there is not enough room around the dining table, many people set up a buffet in the kitchen. Guests fill their plates and find a comfortable place to sit or stand.

#181 - PHOTO

SITES
Key Ingredients
Final 5-03

Children's table at the Crouch family Thanksgiving dinner,
Ledyard, Connecticut, 1940
Photograph by Jack Delano / Library of Congress

Holiday gatherings often bring out the “children’s table,”
where younger guests eat and talk apart from adults.
Graduation to the “adult table” marks one of life’s
passages.

Sidebar

Rules and Remembrance

In 19th-century America, manners were essential for
gaining social elevation and acceptance. Mealtime —
where friends and family met regularly at the table — was
a prime teaching opportunity.

America’s economic and political structure produced a
dynamic environment. Upward economic mobility and
immigrant influences created rapid social change. Etiquette
helped define and maintain class order.

#175 - PHOTO

Table diagram, from “Godey’s Lady’s Book,” 1859

There was — and is — more than one proper way to set a
table. For the clueless, books of etiquette impart explicit
instructions.

GRAPHIC:
from Goops book

From “Goops and How to Be Them: A Manual of Manners
for Polite Infants” by Gelett Burgess, 1900

SITES
Key Ingredients
Final 5-03

in vitrine:

#172 – OBJECT (use one)

Lillian Eichler, *The New Book of Etiquette*, 1936

OR

Frances Benton, *Etiquette*, 1956

OR

Emily Post, *Rules of Etiquette*

Below:

Book of etiquette

Etiquette manuals ease fears of handling social situations in the home. But warmth and welcome — not strict correctness — are what most guests truly value. Every household shapes its own protocol, often conveyed as a matter of family or ethnic tradition.

B #176 – PHOTO

Left: Illustration from “Tiffany’s Table Manners for Teenagers” by Walter Hoving, 1961
Joe Eula, illustrator

Most etiquette books were written for a general audience, but Walter Hoving targeted teenagers: “You don’t have to wait for your hostess to start eating, but don’t leap at your food like an Irish wolfhound.” Hoving disapproved of separate table manners for home and for dining out.

Short i.d. label
inside the vitrine
for each book

Lillian Eichler, “The New Book of Etiquette,” 1936

Frances Benton, “Etiquette,” 1956

Subsection 3

Thanksgiving

In the early 1620s, English Pilgrims of the Plymouth Colony and Wampanoag Indians enjoyed a three-day celebration of feasting and recreation. That event gradually became the central myth for our national holiday of Thanksgiving.

The story creates a compelling image of American ideals: people from two distinct cultures joining together around food, mingling their knowledge, traditions, and goods for the benefit of both.

Patriotic organizations pressed for a national “Founders’ Day” from the late 1700s. It wasn’t until the mid-1800s that a shared meal became the focus of the holiday. Today, virtually every American household celebrates Thanksgiving, and, despite regional differences and personal preferences, it adheres remarkably to the tradition of our forebears.

#189 – PHOTO
(girl with pumpkin pies
on sideboard)

Above:
At the Crouch family Thanksgiving Day dinner, Ledyard,
Connecticut, 1940
Photograph by Jack Delano / Library of Congress

The Pilgrims and Wampanoag Indians probably enjoyed cooked pumpkin during their harvest feast. A foodstuff native to the Americas, pumpkin is a member of the squash family. Native peoples supplied it to the Pilgrims during their first difficult winter. Pumpkin now appears on the Thanksgiving table in the form of pie.

#182 – PHOTO

Below:
“The First Thanksgiving,” 1914
Painting by Jennie Brownscombe
The Granger Collection, New York

Romanticized illustrations of an imagined first Thanksgiving reveal underlying American ideals of family and hospitality. The first Thanksgiving was actually a secular harvest festival — part athletic competition, part feast.

B #183- PHOTO
Photonumber:
MC269-VI-100-9

Children dressed as Pilgrim and Indian, about 1940
Photograph by Robert J. Keller
Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe Institute, Harvard University

We know very little about the first Thanksgiving. But today's holiday enshrines a special moment of hospitality. There are many important — and often tragic — events in the relationships between American Indians and European settlers, but the only one celebrated across the nation recalls Indians and settlers feasting together.

#184 – PHOTO
on transparent panel

Left:
Thanksgiving dinner at the house of Earle Landis,
Neffsville, Pennsylvania, 1942
Photograph by Marjory Collins / Library of Congress

Sidebar

Thanksgiving Food

The event that inspired Thanksgiving, a celebration by Pilgrims and Wampanoag Indians, almost certainly included food readily available in 1620s New England: turkey, lobster, venison, rabbit, and cornmeal pudding with whortleberries.

Today, Thanksgiving foods reflect both regional availability and the benefits of national distribution systems. Like the Louisiana tradition of serving gumbo or

SITES
Key Ingredients
Final 5-03

oyster stew with turkey, virtually every region treasures its own version of the Thanksgiving meal.

#186 - PHOTO
(African American woman plucking turkey)

The Thanksgiving turkey, about 1900
Photograph by Alfred S. Campbell / Library of Congress

Within the observance of Thanksgiving, turkey represents the most authentic link to the Pilgrims. In the 1600s wild turkeys were plentiful, and easy targets for the Pilgrims' weapons. Now domesticated turkey is popular because it is widely available, relatively inexpensive, and simple to prepare.

#187 - PHOTO

Thanksgiving dinner
© Lois Ellen Frank / CORBIS

Dressing or stuffing? The New England term "stuffing" gradually replaced the Southern word "dressing" — at least in national advertisements. Whatever you call it, local foodstuffs are traditionally a primary ingredient. Cranberries and walnuts are used in the Midwest, oysters in states near the Chesapeake Bay, and rice in the coastal South.

#188 – PHOTO

Chinese American family
Photograph by John Wen

Thanksgiving accommodates a wide range of regions, ethnicities, and technologies. Families newly arrived in America are quick to adopt Thanksgiving and customize its standard menu to their tastes.

Tidbits

#201 – PHOTO
(slice of pie)

Apple Pie

Traditions and foodstuffs from all over the world have contributed to America's most beloved dishes. The apple originated in Asia, and European settlers brought seeds and small trees to the American colonies in the 1600s. Pennsylvania Germans perfected apple pie as a dish for carrying into the fields as a midday snack.

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#203 – PHOTO
A pile of bread, 2001

Bread

The variety of breads in America is a product of tradition and available ingredients. In the Southwest, Native peoples made cornmeal tortillas long before Columbus landed. Cornmeal was also a staple in colonial New England, and by 1800 it appeared in the South as corn dodgers, johnnycakes, pones, and more. Wheat, imported from Europe, was planted in the Mid-Atlantic colonies in the 1700s. As the grain moved into the Great Plains, recipes for wheat bread followed.

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PORTAL
(Norman Rockwell)
photo credit

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END OF SCRIPT